

Paper: a high fashion packaging material for Indonesians

For the Indonesian mind, paper packaging is like a high fashion outfit from the runways. It's new, unique, premium, aspirational, but costly and out of reach. Plastic packaging, on the other hand, are like your favourite pair of jeans. They are reliable, durable, affordable, and fit for everyday wear. In fact everybody uses them. You will find plastic packaging everywhere in the Indonesian market. But with increasing interest into the well being of the environment, more sustainable alternatives are becoming more and more researched. Paper packaging sourced from sustainable forests is a potential alternative.

The change from plastic to paper material requires one to take into consideration the needs and requirements from all actors of the supply chain. In this study the perceptions of two actors, the retailers and the consumers, were investigated. It was found that both actors expressed interest in trading plastic for paper. Although the environmental benefits were acknowledged as an added value, the novelty and premiumness of a paper packaging was a stronger driver for purchase. That being said, consumers do show interest in being more environmentally friendly, labelling themselves as 'go green'. On the other hand, retailers had major concerns for the durability and profitability of using paper packaging.

A high degree of manual handling is present in the supply chain in developing countries such as Indonesia. These include manual picking of products for delivery from the central warehouse to individual stores, receiving of goods and storage in stores, shelving in stores and lastly consumer handling when they pick up goods while shopping. Finally, a major concern is the preservation of food quality due to the humid climate of Indonesia. This imposes many technical requirements for a package to enable it to survive the entire supply chain. Most importantly, any and all developments must be cost effective to be feasible for a business to implement.

So paper packaging is attractive, but just like the high fashion dress on the runway, it is not a tangible alternative the many people. Hopefully this and more research to come will help bring the paper packaging from the runway to everyday.

This study was completed with the support from the Swedish paper manufacturer, BillerudKorsnäs, in a continuation of a study in 2014 by Yessica Ariesta which focused on the manufacturing actors within the supply chain. The findings in this study were collected through a series of interviews and field visits were conducted with retail experts and flour consumers in Jakarta, Indonesia during the months of March and April 2015.